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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BAGHDAD 004123

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SUBJECT: BADR ORGANIZATION LEADER AND VICE PRESIDENT
ADVISED HANNAH DISCUSS SECURITY SITUATION

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Robert Gilchrist for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Chair of the Council of Representatives
Security and
Defense Committee and Badr Organization leader Hadi al-Amiri
met John
Hannah, the National Security Adviser to the Vice President
on October
¶19. Amiri thanked the U.S. for its role in liberating Iraq
and helping
to build its democracy. Amiri said that security is the main
challenge
and highlighted several factors that have contributed to the
deteriorating security situation: Saddamists, takfiris,
organized
crime, and sectarian tensions. He blamed MNF-I and Iraqi
Security
Forces (ISF) for helping to create this situation due to the
lack of a
response to sectarian attacks on communities that has led
communities
to turn to militias for support and defense. Amiri offered
the
following suggestions to improve the security situation:
identify who
is responsible for security in Iraq (between the GOI and
MNF-I) and
strengthen the Iraqi government by accelerating training of
the ISF;
provide services in secured areas; ban weapons from non-ISF
groups;
confront quasi-official militias like the Facilities
Protection
Service; implement CPA Order 91; put pressure on regional
governments
to help the GOI rather than support the violence; and activate
the
judiciary. Amiri denied any Badr involvement in militia
activity, or
any improper relationship with Iranian intelligence
organizations,
averring that the group had transformed into a political
party. He
challenged those who condemn Badr to produce any evidence to
the
contrary. END SUMMARY.

Progress Politically, But Security Situation Tense

¶2. (C) Chair of the Council of Representatives Security and
Defense
Committee and Badr Organization leader Hadi al-Amiri

expressed thanks
to John Hannah, the National Security Adviser to the Vice
President on
October 19 for America's role in liberating Iraq and helping
to build
its democracy. He highlighted the many accomplishments in
the
political process from the Governing Council to the current
government.
He expressed appreciation for President Bush and
understanding for the
difficulties the U.S. currently faces in Iraq, and for the
challenges
created by America's enemies as well as its friends. He said
the main
challenge is security and described Iraq as the central front
in the
war against terrorism. He asserted that Iraq's success as a
democracy
will radically change the Middle East, a fact that has led
neighboring
countries to launch a major effort to undermine the new Iraq.
Amiri
expressed his belief that all Iraq's challenges can be
overcome as long
as we have the will to succeed.

13. (C) Amiri then highlighted the following factors that have
contributed to the current security situation:

-- Saddamists ("I don't say Baathists, whom we need to
co-opt"): The
real enemy is Saddamists who committed crimes against the
Iraqi people

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and continue to do so. Saddamists do not want to participate
in the
government; rather, they want to destroy it.

-- Takfiris: They have come from outside of Iraq, and they
enter into
the country through Syria. Once in Iraq, they commit
operations
against the Iraqi people and MNF-I. The takfiris believe
even those
who participated in the elections should be killed. Amiri
claimed that
the takfiris want to establish a Taliban state, but they
cannot do so
on their own so they are supported by the Saddamists, who
provide them
with essential facilitation.

-- Organized Crime: Before the war, around 40,000 criminals
were
released. Because of the instability and lack of security,
they have
been very active in ransom kidnappings. According to Amiri,
these
people are not considered a big problem because organized
crime is
present in all countries.

-- Sectarian Tension: This has become one of the most
dangerous factors
in the violence. He pointed to Zarqawi's letter that
emphasized the
Takfiris' strategy of pushing the Sunni and Shi'a into war,
so that al-
Qaida can remain in Iraq and achieve their goals. Amiri said
Zarqawi
was successful in creating sectarian tensions, but the
tension must be
dealt with.

-- Neighboring Countries: Amiri also complained of a significant effort by Iraq's neighbors to prevent success in Iraq in order to forestall political change in their own countries. "The success of this project means the winds of change will reach them." For this reason, he continued, they give "unlimited support" to the terrorists and so-called resistance in Iraq.

Lack of Security and Response from MNF-I/ISF Led to Militia Formation

¶4. (C) Amiri said he was reluctant to criticize U.S. forces, but charged that MNF-I and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) had helped contribute to the escalation in sectarian tensions. Their failure to respond adequately to attacks on Iraq's communities, he claimed, had forced these communities to turn to militias for protection. He acknowledged that development of militias is taking place at the expense of the state, but stressed that in light of MNF-I and ISF's inability to provide security, Iraqis have no alternative.

¶5. (C) Amiri advocated the following steps for addressing the current deterioration:

-- Identify who is responsible for security in Iraq. It is not clear who between MNF-I and ISF is responsible, Amiri claimed. Unless this lack of clarity is solved, the security situation will not be solved. There needs to be one command with full authority and accountability.

-- Strengthen the GOI, as Iraq's national unity government elected in accordance with the constitution. If this government fails, no other

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government will be able to save Iraq.

-- Accelerate the building and training of the ISF.

-- Provide services to the people, especially in secured areas. He complained that a lot of areas are safe, but nonetheless do not receive assistance or services.

-- Eliminate all faces of violence. Weapons should be exclusively in the hands of the ISF and anyone who carries them illegally should be immediately arrested.

-- Confront quasi-official militias like the Facility Protection Service (FPS). The FPS is made up of 33 subgroups and 140,000 members. They have weapons, permits, and cars but are not accountable to the state and are part of the problem.

-- Implement CPA Order 91 to disband militias that existed

prior to
liberation and integrate some of their members into the ISF.
Amiri
insisted that the U.S. is not serious about its own law and
is blocking
its implementation.

-- Put pressure on neighboring governments who are major
contributors
to the violence in Iraq.

-- Activate the judiciary. In this context, Amiri spoke of
the need
for harsh action against those attacking and undermining the
new Iraq.
Echoing a charge Hannah heard from Foreign Minister Zebari
(septel),
Amiri claimed that if the violence in Iraq were happening in
the U.S.,
the government would be hanging people from lampposts. Amiri
noted
that in Britain, those who incite violence are arrested, yet
in Iraq,
the media and mosques that openly encouraged violence were
left
untouched.

Badr No Longer a Militia and Not an Agent of Iran

¶6. (C) Hannah expressed appreciation for the restraint of the
Shi'a
community (particularly Ayatollah Sistani) in the face of
attacks by
Saddamists and takfiris. Hannah raised U.S. concerns and
suspicions
over Badr's role in fueling sectarian violence and its
long-running
relationship with the Iranian IRGC, identifying both as
obstacles to a
better relationship with America. Amiri replied that Badr had
been an
armed resistance group against Saddam but that after
liberation former
SCIRI leader Muhammad Bakr al-Hakim had ordered Badr to turn
into a
political group, which it did. "We are participating in the
government. I am part of the government, and am the head of
the
defense committee (in the CoR). Why do we need militias? I
believe we
should support the government and abandon militias. We tried
to do so
under Bremer (with CPA order 91), but you are the ones who
hesitated."
Amiri stated that no one has ever produced any evidence that
Badr is
involved in any militia activities or has been infiltrated by
Iranian
intelligence or retaliating against former Baathists. He
said
directly, "If a Badr member is carrying a weapon, he should
be

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disarmed; if he resists, he should be killed." He said he
welcomed
General Casey and MNF-I to bring to him any evidence of Badr
involvement in sectarian violence or attacks against the
coalition, and
promised to take action against any transgressors.

¶7. (C) Amiri suggested that since all of what the "street"
says about
U.S. abuses is so obviously false and conspiratorial (and a

product of propaganda by the Saddamists and Takfiris), the U.S. should consider that the same may be even more true when it comes to Sunni charges against Badr and the Shi'a. Amiri dismissed concerns about Iranian influence over Badr, arguing that Badr would have preferred to work to overthrow Saddam from an Arab country, but that it was not welcomed by Iraq's neighbors. He said that before moving to Iran he himself had first tried to work from Syria against Saddam, but that the government had barred him from doing so. Badr was grateful for a place to train and did not try to hide its good relations with Iran or the fact that Iran provided financial assistance to Badr as did other countries. But he also stressed that Badr's members were not treated well or trusted by Iran, and compared Badr's exile in Iran to that of DeGaulle in Britain. Amiri insisted that if Badr was simply an Iranian agent, it would have conducted operations against U.S. forces. He told Hannah that Kurdish parties also had long-established political, financial, and security relationships with Iran (including the IRGC), but that this did not make the Kurds agents of Iran. The same, he implied, was true of Badr. Amiri stressed to Hannah at the close of their meeting the importance of establishing a strong strategic partnership between the United States and its Iraqi allies, and pledged to be of assistance if the U.S. had evidence of Iranian involvement in targeting U.S. troops.

18. (U) This cable was cleared by OVPNSA John Hannah.
KHALILZAD